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DECORATIVE ART IN LONDON.

BY HENRY B. WHARTLEY.

As year by year the struggle of life becomes more intense and the people more practical, the desire to know how our fathers lived seems to increase, and attempts are made to bring back, not exactly the ideal, but, at all events, the practical life of a past age. I have already alluded to the medieval village which has been reproduced at the Turin Exhibition, and now preparations are being made at the International Health Exhibition at South Kensington to represent the shops and buildings of Old Cheapside. Peasant and other fancy fairs, in which the costumes of all ages and all classes are to be seen, have been common, and one of the last is that which has just been closed at the Albert Hall. No doubt there is much going on around us that is as truly poetic and romantic as in the days of past ages if we only seek for it, but on the whole we must allow that in many places beauty is being positively stamped out. It is, therefore, necessary for us all to be watchful, particularly when our lake scenery is threatened, and we need feel no surprise at the indignation which has been aroused by the Ennerdale Railway Bill.

The influence of Literature on Art was lately the subject of a lecture by Mr. J. Spencer Swann, and the speaker came to the conclusion that the poet is too indefinite in his descriptions and allusions to affect directly so tangible a thing as the house. As a rule, poets do not display much knowledge of practical architecture, for their creations are mostly "Castles in the Air." The English poet whose knowledge of the technique of architecture, in the opinion of Mr. Swann, surpasses that of his brethren, is Mr. Browning.

Although minor changes of taste are continually occurring, the public appears never to tire of hearing about art in the house, or art in every day life, and these have been the titles of several lectures given lately by well-known men. No doubt all this preaching has its effect, and taste is gradually improving, for the houses in our streets are made more picturesque. Mr. R. W. Edis's design for the new Constitutional Club in Northumberland Avenue, in the piquant style of the German Renaissance with its high gables, is spoken well of.

The hope of a greater change than any architect can perform has been held out by the Rev. J. A. Rivington. This is to be caused by means of a new process for producing permanent mural paintings, invented by Adolf Kain, of Munich, by which painting in the open air can be produced which will last as long as the material upon which it is imposed. Washing is all that is required to remove the smoked blackness of years; and the most charming work of the painter may be scrubbed with a scrubbing brush, not only without injury, but with the advantage of bringing to light the bright tints that may have been obscured by the filth of the atmosphere.

Mr. Rivington is most enthusiastic in preaching the merits of the process and, apparently, with good reason. He says in the peroration of a lecture on the subject: "I see London and all our great centres of life blossoming like a garden with artistic creations that serve to break the hideous monotony of nineteenth century streets."

I see art, under these influences, taking its place as a mighty teacher, with a voice more potent and far-reaching than it ever could possess before, a voice that cries from the walls, the streets, the public buildings of our cities, that 'those who run may read.'

The only drawback is that as the many are more inclined to the ugly than the beautiful, we may have some hideous designs perpetuated for long years.

The Albert Exhibition Palace, at Battersea, about which I wrote some months ago, is so far advanced that it has been visited by the members of the Architectural Association. It is a reconstruction of the materials of the Dublin Exhibition. Theatres continue to be built and, apparently, to succeed, for no sooner has the Prince's Theatre in Coventry Street been opened, than another is completed in Leicester Square. The site of the "Empire Theatre" has been an unfortunate one, as more than one unsuccessful attempt has been made to start a theatre here, but now a building with many improvements has

decoration, having, perhaps, said enough of buildings and exterior work. Mr. Finworth, respecting whose fine terra cottas I have already spoken on former occasions, is now at work on a new material—white marble. His subject is this time not a scriptural one, but an illustration of a poem by Mr. Gosse. He is also working in low relief so that he may be said to have taken a new departure.

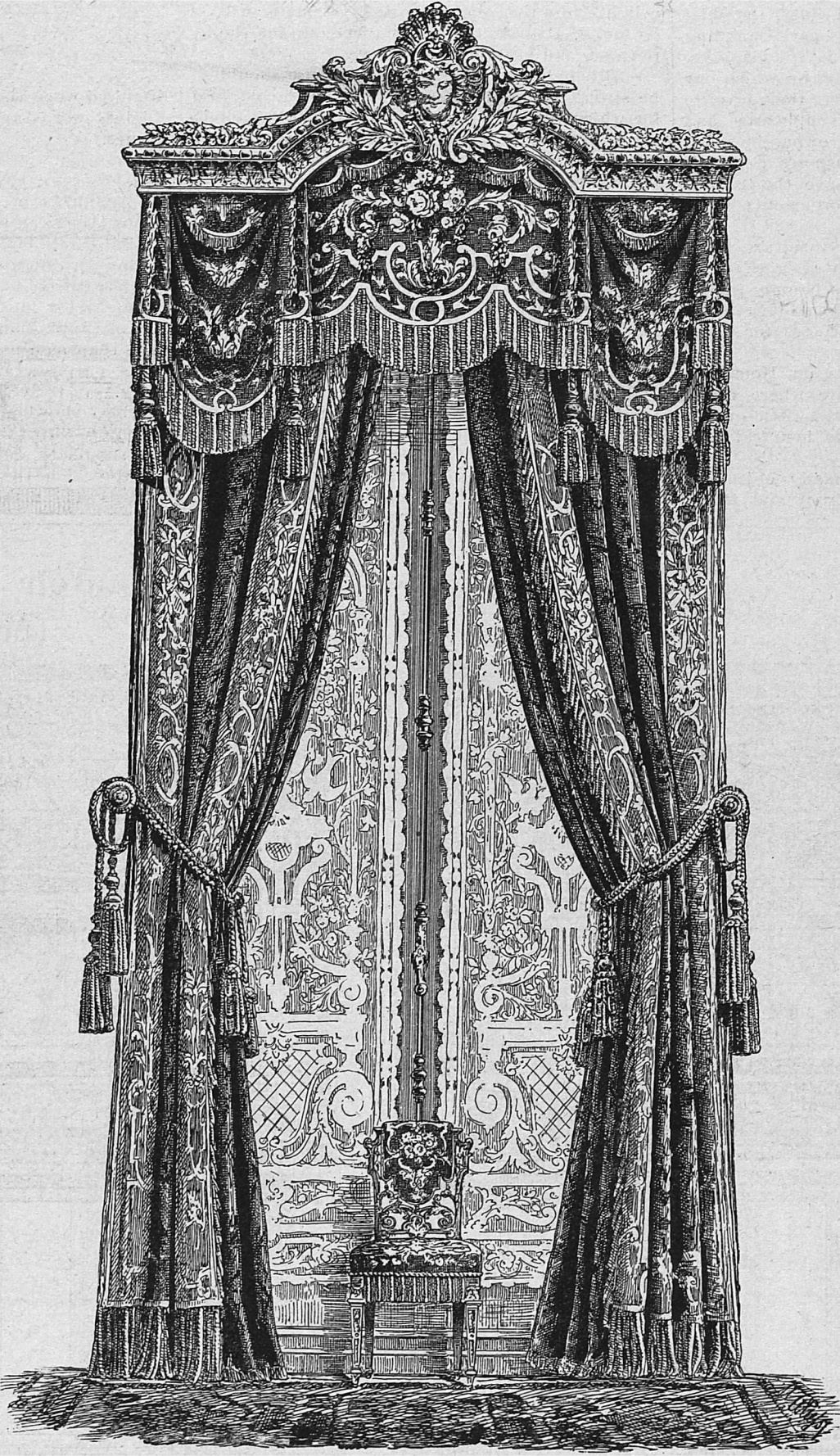
A beautiful reredos has just been completed for the church of St. Michael, Battersea, and it has been produced by means of a new process. The panels are of white marble inlaid with colors of permanent enamel paint. The pattern is drawn by the artist himself, and the parts where the drawing appears are incised by a special manipulation and filled in with enamel. The designs for this reredos are by Mr. William White, and the whole work has been carried out by Messrs. Keith & Co., the patentees of the process.

I mentioned, a month or so ago, the beautiful tapestries at Hampton Court which had been allowed to remain in a neglected state. A question has been asked in the House of Commons respecting their restoration. The answer obtained was that they had not been lost sight of, but nothing has been done at present for their protection.

An exhibition of furniture at the School of Art Needlework has brought into public view some interesting examples of Arabian and other Oriental styles. The colors are somewhat too fresh and glaring, but the collection is a pleasing one, and the agreeable work of the school is set off by these novel specimens of furniture. The Oriental taste has superseded the early English, and it will itself be superseded—by what?

A most satisfactory sign of the improved taste now prevalent, is the attention paid to harmony of colors. The ordinary English eye has the credit, or rather the discredit, of being almost blind to true beauty of color. Much has been done to create a better taste, and one may hope that soon the criticism will have become untrue. Mr. George Aitchison has given two important lectures at the Royal Academy on Color Decoration. In the first he urged the need of color on our walls, and in the second he treated the subject of glass, both stained and clear, with a fullness of information that makes his lecture one of considerable value.

The coming Health Exhibition is to contain works of decorative and ornamental art designed by students in schools of art, and furniture, metal work, pottery, glass, and woven and printed fabrics are all to be represented. Although this exhibition will be mainly devoted to the practical subjects of health and food, I believe that fine art will be fairly represented at what will probably be the favorite resort of "the world" in its widest sense during the season of 1884. I shall hope to tell of this later on.



ARRANGEMENT OF WINDOW DECORATION.

been produced. Room is made for the convenient circulation of the audience, and the means of exit are pronounced satisfactory. The house is to be lighted by gas.

Much discussion has taken place with regard to the famous Wellington statue lately at Hyde Park Corner. It is not, as first proposed, to be melted down, but will be sent to Aldershot or some other military station. The world-famed Hyde Park Corner is to be a name of the past, and to be superseded by Wellington Place. I hope this will not be so, and the joking suggestion that it should be called Wellington Junction is likely to bring the proposal into disrepute.

I will now turn to the subject of internal

height and width of doors and windows. The question is whether the apparent proportions of apartments cannot be greatly modified by the treatment of the necessary openings. A window in the centre of one side of a room gives more light than if at one side of the centre, but it has the effect of shortening the length of that side. The same is true of doors in similar positions. The higher a window is the more light it will give, but the lower the room will appear. In doors, nothing is gained by increasing the height beyond a proportion to the width that shall prevent a stunted appearance. Their relative height to that of the windows is a nice question of balance, that can be best determined by experience.